

REMARKS

Specification

The specification has been amended in accordance with MPEP 2163.06 to merely correct phraseology in the description of the invention.

Drawings

Applicant respectfully requests approval for the attached replacement sheets.

Claims

Claims 1-8 and 12-29 are pending in the application. Claims 1, 12, 20, and 26 are independent. Claims 1-2, 7, 12-15, and 19-22 have been amended to more clearly define the invention. Claims 23-29 have been added.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 1, 2, 8, 12-13, and 19-21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Bennett (U.S. Pat. No. 6,251,013). Claims 1-2, 12-13, and 20-21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Jaffe (U.S. Pat. No. 6,517,432).

The invention as now claimed in claim 1 defines over the cited prior art or any combination thereof. Claim 1 recites a gaming machine comprising a display having a grid 14 of cells 16, a controller 22 programmed for initiating a normal random display of a first plurality of game elements 20 such that one of the first plurality of game elements 20 is displayed in each of the cells 16. The controller 22 is also programmed for initiating a bonus random display of a second plurality of game elements 20 in response to a triggering combination 30 of the first plurality of game elements 20 in the normal random display such that *the first plurality of game elements 20 are replaced by the second plurality of game elements 20 in each of the cells 16.* Hence, the reels 24 are re-spun for the bonus random

display. The controller 22 is also programmed for designating at least one of the cells 16 in the grid as a wild cell 34 independent of a game element 20 in the wild cell 34 in response to initiation of the bonus random display.

Bennett discloses a gaming machine 10 comprising a display 20 having a grid of cells 135 and a controller programmed for initiating a normal random display of game elements 40 in the grid such that one game element 40 is displayed in each of the cells 135. The controller is programmed to initiate a bonus round in response to a triggering combination of the game elements 40 in the normal random display. Referring to the first and second embodiments disclosed in Bennett (column 4, line 50 - column 5, line 24), the bonus round includes sprites 110 (fairies) designating a portion of the game elements 40 in the normal random display as being wild. However, Bennett does not suggest replacing the plurality of game elements 40 in each of the cells in the normal random display with a second plurality of game elements in the bonus round, as required by claim 1. Moreover, there is no teaching in Bennett to display a first plurality of game elements in a normal random display, replace each of the first plurality of game elements with a second plurality of game elements in a bonus random display, and designate one of the cells as a wild cell in response to initiating the bonus random display. Neither before, during, nor after the game element 40 of the normal random display is designated as wild 130, does Bennett re-spin the reels, i.e., generate new game elements 40 in each of the cells 135. Bennett simply initiates the normal random display and then selects a game element 40 as being wild 130. Once the wild game element 130 is designated, winning combinations are determined in the normal random display using the wild game element 130, i.e., no bonus random display is initiated.

In third and fourth embodiments of Bennett (column 5, lines 25-45), Bennett suggests swapping game elements in the grid or re-spinning a selected row or column in the grid in response to the sprite (fairy) selecting the same during the bonus round. Here, none of the cells or game elements are designated as being wild and only a selected portion of the game elements are being replaced. For these reasons, Bennett is distinguished by claim 1.

Jaffe discloses a gaming machine 10 comprising a display 12 having a grid of cells and a controller 16 programmed for initiating a normal random display of a plurality of game elements in the grid such that one game element is displayed in each of the cells. The controller is programmed to initiate a bonus round in response to a triggering combination and designate at least one of the cells in the bonus round as being wild independent of the game element in the wild cell. However, Jaffe does not disclose replacing the first plurality of game elements in each of the cells with a second plurality of game elements. Moreover, there is no teaching in Jaffe to display a first plurality of game elements in a normal random display, replace each of the first plurality of game elements with a second plurality of game elements in a bonus random display, and designate one of the cells as a wild cell in response to initiating the bonus random display. Instead, Jaffe freezes the normal random display of game elements and designates one of the cells in the normal random display as being wild. This operation is similar to the first and second embodiments of Bennett. Hence, Jaffe is also distinguished by claim 1.

In summary, neither Bennett nor Jaffe anticipate the present invention as defined in claim 1. For this reason, Applicant respectfully submits that independent claim 1 is placed in condition for allowance.

Applicant respectfully submits that dependent claims 2-8 and 23-25 are also placed in condition for allowance based on their merits and based on their dependency to claim 1 and the failure of the references to suggest claim 1.

In addition, Applicant respectfully submits that claims 12-22 and 26-29 are placed in condition for allowance based on the reasons set forth above in reference to claim 1 in distinguishing claim 1 over Bennett and Jaffe.

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Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 2, 3-7, 13-18, and 21-22 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over Bennett in view of Jaffe. These rejections are now moot based on the above remarks and the failure of the references, when combined, to teach each and every element required by claim 1.

Applicant believes the application is now in condition for allowance, which allowance is respectfully solicited. Applicant believes that no additional fees are required, however, the Commissioner is authorized to charge our Deposit Account No. 08-2789 for any additional fees or credit the account for any overpayment.

**Respectfully submitted,
HOWARD & HOWARD ATTORNEYS**

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Date



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